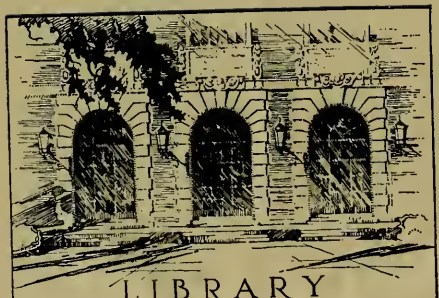

LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

22

THIRTY YEARS' PROGRESS

IN FEMALE EDUCATION

AN ADDRESS

TO

THE STUDENTS OF QUEEN'S COLLEGE

AND THEIR FRIENDS

BY THE

REV. J. LLEWELYN DAVIES, M.A.

PRINCIPAL

June 27th, 1879

LONDON

PRINTED BY BALLANTYNE, HANSON & CO.

CHANDOS STREET, STRAND

ADDRESS,

ETC.

In the earlier years of its history, it was the custom of Queen's College to hold an annual meeting, at which the Principal read a Report of the condition and work of the College during the year which had just gone by. But after a while the meeting ceased to be held, and for many years an Annual Report has been addressed to the Visitor in the names of the Council and the Committee of Education, and has been printed for distribution instead of being orally delivered to an audience. Queen's College has never had any recitation of speeches nor any Prize-giving; and probably the reading of an Annual Report, giving an account of a quiet year's work, was not thought a sufficient inducement for the assembling of a meeting. We have not resolved to recur to the original practice; the Council and Committee will present their Report this year as usual to the Visitor. But we feel that it is a loss to the College to be without some yearly gathering of its members and friends, such as the Prize-Day brings to nearly all colleges and schools. And for the present year, at all events, we have thought that there are exceptional circumstances, affecting female education generally, and our own College in particular, which it is important to bring to the special notice of the students and their friends, which have therefore warranted us in inviting your attendance to-day.

You cannot be unaware of the great progress that has been made of late years by the cause of higher female education. But how rapid the movement has been, and to what points it has advanced, is not easily realized. It is evident that the time for this success had come. We often find in the history of social movements that for years and generations the in-

fluences in favour of some beneficial change have been at work, sapping and undermining the obstacles which oppose it, but with little apparent progress, and that at last the barrier gives way, and the stream flows on with a rapidity which excites astonishment. I do not know how far the way may have been secretly prepared for the advance in the education of girls and women which our generation is witnessing, and how much may be simply due to the resolute and skilful and persevering efforts of the workers in this cause. But these labours have found a propitious time, and have had quicker and more abundant results than sober anticipation would have expected. A generation, I believe, commonly means thirty years; and our College was established just thirty-one years ago. In looking back to its commencement, therefore, we are surveying a generation's progress; and we are justified in taking the establishment of Queen's College as the beginning of an epoch. The scheme of the College itself, the Lectures in which that scheme was expounded, and the actual teaching begun in the year 1848, presented to the public mind of this country an ideal of female education which was recognised as new and bold. Founded by some Professors of King's College and other like-minded men, who accepted Mr. Maurice as their leader and the exponent of their common aims, Queen's College was a living assertion of the claim of women to share to the full in the educational interests and advantages of the other sex. It is this claim which has continued to be asserted with so much success in the years that have followed. I need not say that there was nothing revolutionary in the manner in which the claim was affirmed by Professor Maurice and his colleagues; they were men of outspoken loyalty to the Church and the State, and rejoiced to be allowed to put their new College under the auspices of the Queen and of the Bishop of London—names which still honour our prospectus. But a College for women, seeking to stand side by side with King's College, and offering instruction of the same class, was far in advance of anything that had been done or even projected in that day.

It is a well-known saying of one of the noblest Frenchmen of our age, that he came to England from time to time, in order that he might take a bath of freedom. Whoever desires to take a bath of high aims and aspirations should go

The Rare Book & Manuscript Library UIUC

to the writings of Maurice. Never was there a reformer or founder so full of faith, so intolerant of all mercenary and mechanical and timorous views, so resolute to regard all persons, women and men, girls and boys, in their highest character and relations. To read what Maurice had in mind when he took the chief part in creating our College is to feel all vulgar thoughts and aims put to shame. If you will go with him, he compels you to breathe a somewhat difficult air, but one which you must confess to be heavenly and invigorating. Maurice would not have been content, on behalf of himself and his fellow-labourers, that they should be regarded as seeking to place women on a level with men in respect of educational advantages. It was not any equality of women with men that they set before themselves. What they desired was that women should have the best and highest education which could be provided for them, and should not be debarred because they were women from any studies which might enlarge and inform the human mind, and give culture to human faculties. But, as a matter of fact, their plan was that the same Professors should give the same kind of instruction to young women at Queen's College as they were giving to young men at King's College. And the movement of the last thirty years, to the results of which I am to day calling your attention, has had very definitely the character of assimilating the methods of education in use for both sexes. The approximation has not been exclusively on the side of female education. The studies of boys have borrowed from what was formerly thought to be the girls' province. From both sides, though far more decidedly from the feminine side, there has been movement towards common forms and methods of education. In this movement Queen's College took the lead.

To obtain for women a share in the education thought good for men was, in fact, the practical thing to be done. The question whether the existing methods of education were satisfactory, and what improvements might be made in them, was one which might be considered independently, and in the interest of both sexes ; but every inquiry of this kind was sure to have boys and young men chiefly in view. It was an obvious policy for those who wished women to be better educated, to claim in the first place that they should be admitted to the studies, the teaching, the educational

arrangements, which had the stamp of common approval upon them. In the public provision made for elementary education, this assimilation was adopted at once without controversy. In our primary school system, the education for the one sex runs side by side with that for the other, with very slight differences. Girls are taught very nearly the same things as boys, and examined by the same Inspectors in precisely the same manner; the pupil teachers of the one sex have a nearly identical training with that of the other; and there are female Training Colleges, very closely resembling the male Training Colleges. And no one, so far as I know, has uttered any protest against this assimilation as unnatural or improper or injurious. It would be impossible for any one to desire more for the female sex in secondary or higher education than what has been conceded as a matter of course, and with confessedly the best results, in primary education. The old notion, that girls ought to have a totally different education from that of boys, has however lingered on with obstinate vitality. Nature itself seemed to many to prescribe that boys should learn the classics and mathematics, and girls the arts and modern languages; that boys should continue their formal studies to the age of 21 or 22, girls to the age of 17 or 18. Is not the female nature slighter and weaker, it was asked, than the male? Then let girls have a light, and boys a solid, education. But suppose this reasoning transferred from the mind to the body. It is the physical nature that is so obviously less robust in women than in men. Ought there not then to be an entirely distinct diet for the two sexes, meat and beer for the male, pastry and creams and light wine for the female? Ought not their hours of taking food to be different? No one supposes that Nature prescribes these distinctions. Women sit at the same table and have the same dishes offered to them as men. I do not say that they eat or drink as much; but they are under no formal restrictions; they partake of a common diet with men, in such proportions as Nature and their own discretion suggest. Now, it is not contended by any that the minds of the two sexes differ more than their bodies; and the utmost that is asked on behalf of women, is that there should be the same kind of community in intellectual studies as now exists with universal consent in physical diet.

Queen's College, by its constitution and profession, has all along borne an important witness in behalf of the cause which it was established to serve. And we may fairly claim that it has done much good educational work. Its students have had the advantage of being taught by distinguished men, and many of them gratefully recognise the awakening and inspiration which have been still more valuable to them than the literary or other instruction which they have received in the College. I could recite a long list of honoured names, of women as well as men, associated in various ways with the work of Queen's College, but I leave them to your knowledge and memory. There is one of its officers, however, who has an altogether exceptional claim to be mentioned on such an occasion as this—my learned and accomplished predecessor, Dr. Plumptre. Connected with the College as one of its teachers from the year 1851, Dr. Plumptre for more than 20 years—for two-thirds of its life—was the acting head of its administration; and the obligations under which Queen's College lies to the unwearied services of such a man cannot easily be measured, and will not soon be forgotten. But this College has gone on doing its own work quietly and unobtrusively, without taking much account of the educational movement outside its walls. Its constitution, perhaps, has not been favourable to change or enterprise. When we look out upon the English world around us, we see that the relation of our College to the female education now going forward, is a very different one from that in which it stood to the same education in 1848. So great an advance has been made in lines independent of Queen's College.

Let me note briefly the principal incidents of this progress. I take only the most prominent, and do not keep strictly to the order of time. Queen's College, as you know, though it forbears to put forward "denominational" pretensions, has always been under the Bishop of the Diocese as its Visitor, and has proposed to give instruction, not only in the books of Holy Scripture, but in Theology and Church History. I suppose that it was chiefly on this account that another College was founded, having nearly the same educational objects and methods as Queen's, which though it has recently changed its local habitation still bears the name of Bedford College. This is dissociated from

every religious communion, and gives no formal religious teaching. Another new College of the same class as Queen's, the Alexandra College at Dublin, was founded by our Principal, Dr. Trench, when he became Archbishop of Dublin. It is difficult to draw a line between colleges and schools; but at Queen's College, certainly, whilst the methods of teaching have had in view students of more advanced years, the great majority of the actual pupils have been of school-girl age. I therefore mention here the creation of public girls' schools, such are becoming daily more numerous and more important. I am not sure whether I ought to call the Cheltenham College a school; but the large institutions in Camden Town, under Miss Buss's direction, and the vigorous schools planted throughout the country by the Girls' Day School Company, expressly aim to be for girls what our older public schools are for boys. A step of another kind was taken, when the Cambridge Local Examinations were opened to girls. This was done tentatively at first. There was a good deal of trepidation in many minds, as to what might happen if girls were examined by University Examiners. It was feared that they might faint and be made ill, or that the domestic bloom would be rubbed off their minds. By a private and personal arrangement, a certain number of girls were examined by friendly Cambridge Examiners in just the same way as the boys, until experience showed that such an examination was a safe and innocuous process. The University of Cambridge, thereupon, with little hesitation, undertook to put no difference between girls and boys in respect of its Local Examinations. I am proud of the generosity manifested throughout this whole movement by my own University. I remember Mr. Maurice telling me, after he had gone to reside at Cambridge as Professor of Moral Philosophy, that there was nothing about which he found the younger graduates more zealous, than in endeavouring to put every academical advantage at the service of women. It is impossible to say for how much this cause is indebted to the sympathy and courage of a number of Cambridge men. The experimental examination which I have just mentioned was the beginning of a long series of helpful acts, which only wait now to be crowned by the formal admission of women to Cambridge University degrees. I say their formal admission, because

—as you may know—they are virtually admitted to them already through the kind offices of friendly Examiners. It was a distinct step in advance when what is now Girton College was opened in 1869, at Hitchin. This was an uncompromising attempt to create for women a College, not like Queen's or Bedford, but of the same type as the Cambridge Colleges. And the attempt has prospered. This College has made gradual assured progress, and is still lengthening its cords and strengthening its stakes. In the same year an association was formed to organise Lectures for women at Cambridge; and as a place of residence for the students who were drawn to the town for the sake of attending these Lectures, a boarding-house was opened, which has developed into Newnham Hall and Norwich House and many lodgings under the same supervision. Oxford, as it has done throughout this movement, is following in the wake of Cambridge. A similar association has been formed there, and two Halls are about to be opened, one of them bearing the honoured name of Mrs. Somerville, for the reception of students. In London, University College some years ago gave encouragement and hospitality to a Ladies' Association, which made arrangements for the voluntary instruction of classes by Professors of that College, and it has now gone on to open most of its Lecture-rooms, I believe, to women and men indiscriminately. More recently, King's College, not to be behind its rival, planted an offshoot for women in Kensington, which sprang at once into flourishing prosperity. And lastly, to change the metaphor, the edifice was crowned, when the University of London, which had already opened its Matriculation Examination to young women, was induced in 1878 to know no distinction of sex in examining for, and admitting to, any of its degrees. It was to the determined attempt to open the medical profession to women that this last success was due. And I might well include, amongst the most important achievements for the promotion of female education, the establishment of the London School of Medicine for women, which is now training female medical students on exactly the same level as that of the Hospital Schools for men.

Well, in this concession of the University of London women have received all that they can ask from a University.

In Girton College, as a home of academical study, and in these London University Degrees, the tide of which we have been noticing the advance has reached high-water mark. A girl has now the chance of attending a good public School, of sharing Collegiate life and training, and of winning a University Degree—just as if she were a boy.

I have intimated already that this attainment of equality with the other sex, is only the form which circumstances have imposed upon the great effort of the last thirty years, and does not represent the ultimate desire in the hearts of those who have taken part in it. It must be considered a distinct advantage, indeed, that the two sexes should have such a fellowship of studies and knowledge as may enrich and exalt the communion between them. It is surely an injury and not a gain to the companionship of domestic and conjugal life, that the woman should be unable to enter fully into the intellectual interests of the man. And for this reason it might be rightly desired that girls and boys, young women and young men, should have similar opportunities of education. But what is most important is, that either sex should have the teaching and the training which will do the most for it, and bring it forward to its highest possible life. It would be an unworthy aim, that we should be struggling to get for a girl just what a boy has, without considering whether it is good in itself, and good for her, or not. Such an aim we of Queen's College decisively repudiate. If we prescribe to our girls that they shall learn Latin as well as French or German or Italian, it is not simply because boys learn it, but because we are convinced that the learning of Latin is a most desirable element in a girl's education. If we are inviting those who may come to us to look forward to the Examinations of the University of London, we have felt bound to assure ourselves that it will be a good thing for them to prepare for these Examinations. And this is, on the whole, our conviction. We desire to attach the working system of the College to the successive Examinations of the University of London. But we should not like to be supposed to put a blind faith in Examinations.

There are two principal features of the general educational movement of the last twenty or thirty years which have

occasioned much controversy, and which are regarded with reasonable misgivings. One is the enlargement of the range of studies, the other the development of the system of examinations and prizes. Let me offer a few remarks on each of these features.

A boy's education consisted till recently in learning what he could of the classics, which meant Latin and Greek, and of mathematics. When inquiry and reform entered this field, it was inevitable that it should be asked, "Why should classics and mathematics be the whole of education?" It was seen that there was much more that it was desirable to know and to learn. Some urged the claims of modern languages, and pointed out that it was really disgraceful for English gentlemen in an age like this not to know something of French and German. Others pleaded that a systematic study of history and literature was indispensable to one who would be a man of culture. The ancient classics themselves were quoted by others, to show the importance of including the arts, and music especially, in a scheme of general education. Most energetically the claims of natural science were asserted; it was proclaimed to be monstrous that educated persons should know nothing even of the elements of sciences which were revolutionising the external world and the world of thought together. It was easy for all the claimants to establish their respective positions; and the obvious course of action suggested by their arguments was to teach, not only classics and mathematics, but also French and German, and literature and history and geography, and music and drawing, and chemistry and botany and geology and zoology, and any number of other ologies. But then it was soon found, if it did not before occur to the educator, that the human brain is of limited strength, and the school day of no more than six or eight hours; and that to attempt to teach all these things was to confuse the brain and to teach nothing. So we have been in a great difficulty. Of all the things that human beings would be the better for knowing, how many can we attempt to teach; and if we are to choose, which are to have the preference, which are to be left out of the curriculum? This problem is far from being solved yet. It still exercises the minds of those who have the control of education. The most hopeful method of dealing with it appears to lie in extending the principle of *option*;—

to give fairly equal encouragement to a considerable number of studies, and to allow a limited choice to be made amongst them. But this is partly a confession of being baffled; and there is at the same time a conviction by no means declining in strength, that certain subjects ought to have precedence as elements of universal education, amongst which the old classics and mathematics ought to be well represented. The excellence of Latin and Greek, and of arithmetic and geometry and algebra, as instruments of culture and discipline, was probably never more intelligently recognised than now.

As to the system of Examinations, of which prizes form a natural part, there are few who would profess to regard it with unmixed satisfaction. But its immense development, keeping pace with the most earnest desire of improvement, is enough of itself to show that it meets some needs which are deeply and universally felt. Every one who has sought to spread education over some new surface, or to direct it into some new channel, has almost without exception had recourse to competitive examination as a practical means of attaining his end. It has been found to be a necessary instrument; and there is a danger lest the machinery of education should thrust out the better parts of education itself. Who indeed can open his mind to the old and high conceptions of knowledge as precious and to be desired for its own sake, and not experience a recoil from the perpetual advertising of costly prizes and the unresting succession and conflict of examinations which our new system involves? There is no wonder if the world is somewhat weary of it. It is well that it should be. Examinations and prizes are not of a nature to awaken or to satisfy the higher needs of the human soul. If the pursuit of knowledge is really to flourish, the nobler ambition must be kindled, the joy in learning and apprehending, the passionate love of order and unity, must be quickened and fed. Contemplation, what Mr. Matthew Arnold calls the playing of thought about an object, must be encouraged, instead of being hustled and ordered to move on. The sense of fellowship must be upheld against the competitive instinct with which one struggles to get before another. We need, in short, to keep up a perpetual protest and resistance against some of the influences of a system of Examinations.

And it should be the constant aim of teachers to counteract by the spirit and tone of their teaching all that there is in this system to over-stimulate the mind, to present knowledge as a means of getting marks, or to promote ungenerous feeling. But it ought not to be impossible to use examinations without abusing them. To dispense with them would be no security for the preservation of the higher spirit of study. An examination is a guide to both teacher and pupil; it serves as a convenient goal; it is the only available test of diligence and sound knowledge; it applies a constant stimulus to flagging industry. With all its defects and dangers—and I think I am not insensible to them—a system of examination seems to me indispensable as instrumental machinery for the education of the many.

It has been a distinction of Queen's College from the first that no prizes have been offered to its students, except a very few scholarships which have been thrown open to competition. It was characteristic of Mr. Maurice that he was inclined to look down upon prizes as offering bribes to lower motives than those to which he delighted to appeal. The precedent of doing without prizes was set in his time, and it has been followed since as a rule of the College. We are most of us so implicated in the prize-giving system, that it would be inconsistent in us to disapprove of prizes at Queen's College as a matter of principle. Mr. Maurice himself did not refuse to distribute prizes elsewhere and to congratulate the receivers of them. I do not feel that we are pledged not to entertain the question of giving prizes, such as books or medals, at the College. We are pledged, as Mr. Maurice would have reminded us, to the cultivation of a higher spirit, not to any rule or custom. But I am glad to think that the want of prizes has never been felt amongst us. Our girls are for the most part so willing to work, that there is more need to caution them against overwork than to rouse their energies by any stimulus. It may be a little disappointing to some of them to hear of nice prizes won elsewhere, by girls as well as boys, and to go home at the end of each year empty-handed; but we certainly do not want to urge our best pupils to increased exertion, and it is not proposed that we should make any change in our custom with regard to prizes.

But success in an examination, as proved by marks or a certificate, is of the nature of an honorary prize, and Queen's

College has not moved so high above the earth as to disdain examinations. The College was established and incorporated, "for the general education of ladies, and for granting certificates of knowledge." We have given, and continue to give, certificates to those who are proved by examination to be entitled to them. The general work of the pupils during the year is tested at the end of the Easter Term by Cambridge Examiners. But we have resolved to place in future the Matriculation Examination of the University of London as the goal of our old Four Years' course. The subjects required by that examination will be expressly taught in the second senior or fourth year, although the teaching of the College will include other subjects as well. As a sequel to this Four Years' course, we are establishing a distinct Higher Course of two years; and the teaching to be given in these years will keep in view the next succeeding Examinations of the University, the first and the second for the B.A. degree. As before, we shall not limit the Lectures of this more advanced course to the subjects of the Examinations; we propose to continue such courses of Lectures as we have had this year on Church history, political economy, botany, physiology, and other subjects, but we shall make it our object to aid as effectually as we can any students who may aim at the degree. I will not weary you by reciting now the respective subjects of these three Examinations; they may be found in the London University Calendar, or in the Queen's College Calendar which we are about to issue for the first time this year. Our programme of Lectures and Lecturers will also be announced as soon as it can be definitely arranged. The working of our scheme may not improbably show deficiencies and want of complete organisation at first; but our ambition is to draw to Queen's College earnest students of the same age and class as those who are now pursuing their studies at Cambridge, and we are prepared not only to welcome them with sympathy but also to make any special effort that may seem desirable to assist them in their aims. I need hardly say that those who may succeed in obtaining the B.A. degree of the University of London will secure evidence, both for their own satisfaction and for that of others, of their having received a very sound and superior education.

Some of those who have already passed the Matriculation

Examination, which has been open under another name to women for some years, may be living in London, and prepared to begin studying at once for the B.A. degree. But it is more probable that we shall not find for a year or two amongst those who attend the Lectures of our Higher Course any who are qualified by previous matriculation to seek the first degree. Whilst we shall gladly receive any who may come on to us from such schools as those to which I have referred, we look chiefly to the retaining of those who are now our pupils.

It has been the disappointing experience of Queen's College from the first that the majority of its pupils have left the College, or have ceased to be more than occasional attendants at its Lectures, before they have even passed through our Four Years' course. At seventeen or eighteen years of age, at the end perhaps of their second junior or even their first junior year, they have been taken away from study, to go into society or to be companions to their parents at home. You know what a social custom of this kind is, how imperious, how obstinate, how utterly contemptuous of argument! It seems almost hopeless to attempt to make any impression upon it. But the movement of the time is with us, and that may give us courage. The change must have small beginnings and work its way gradually. And the change has certainly begun. In one household after another it has been felt, apart from the necessity of learning thoroughly in order to be teachers of others, that the interest and value of an advanced education were worth the sacrifices that might have to be made for it. What chiefly impresses my own mind is, the greatly superior power of apprehension and insight which comes with advancing years and enlarged experience and more cultivated intellectual faculties. A girl who discontinues regular study at seventeen or eighteen has not yet used her best opportunities. Look at the ordinary career of a young man: is it not universally understood that his college time has a much higher quality, as a period of study, than any part of his school time? Experience shows that, even if the female nature be somewhat more early in maturing than the male, the young woman has no more than the young man reached her most effective time for regular study before she is eighteen. One could not wish that the real charities of home should suffer,

even for the highest promise of intellectual improvement; and in many cases, I am ready to admit, there are domestic duties to be discharged which demand the abandonment of regular study. Multitudes of boys are obliged to leave school early in order to earn their living; and there may be other reasons besides this, requiring a girl to leave school at seventeen. I have no thought of contending that every girl who has no need to earn a living ought to study for a University degree; it is enough for me to plead that trivial reasons should not be allowed to stand in the way of so substantial a good as the prolonged and extended study which may make a life much happier and richer in itself and much more useful to other lives. I hope it is not an accidental circumstance, but a good sign for the future, that we have the promise of a larger class for our first senior year, next October, than the College has ever had before.

You know how utterly destitute of endowment our College is; in this respect we are not much less fortunate than most schools and colleges for girls. The stronger sex has appropriated the endowments of education. But the Council have resolved to offer two scholarships of thirty guineas for two years, to students preparing for the B.A. degree. These will be awarded by examination, if we have any qualified candidates, before the beginning of the October term. If they are not taken this year, no doubt the College will renew the offer next year. In time we may have other scholarships, temporary and permanent, given us by the kindness of friends. If we can do such work as we propose, the traditions of Queen's College ought surely to command for it a generous support.

It was always the idea of this College to give collegiate instruction to young women capable of profiting by it. I see that in its earlier years special courses of Lectures were given, not unlike those which we are now endeavouring to organise, "for the convenience of visitors to London during the Easter term." And we cannot do better, I believe, for our younger pupils than in seeking to establish a higher training for their seniors. It is a proved fact in education, that care for the higher and more advanced training draws up and benefits the lower at the same time. I like to think of a happy period of some twelve or more years spent under the fostering tuition of Queen's College. A child may come

to us at eight years of age, or even earlier, into a school which our Cambridge Examiner of last year pronounced to be doing as well as a school could do. At fourteen the girl, well-grounded and disciplined, will go up into the College, probably with a scholarship, for the Four Years' course. At the end of that course she will pass the Matriculation Examination, I hope in honours. She will then be eighteen, and, with or without the help of another Scholarship, she will go on, with many companions and friends, to the more advanced studies of our Higher Course. Before she is twenty-one, or soon after, she wins the stamp of a University degree, and there can be no doubt of her having had good and wide instruction, and having profited by it. Even then, perhaps, she does not altogether leave the College, but is glad to come back to it, as her old intellectual home, for occasional study under less pressure of system, and with more choice and ease. Is there anything in an education like this that need make her a worse daughter, or spoil her for a wife? I trust that, before another generation has gone by, the friends of Queen's College may be able to point to many happy examples of such a career, dispelling all vain fears, and justifying our most hopeful anticipations.